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RECENTLY LAUNCHED ORGANIZATION, COMUNIDADES, AWARDED GRANT TO ADVANCE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN SKAMANIA COUNTY

July 14, 2020 (Hood River, OR)—[Community Foundation for Southwest Washington](#) (CFSWW) awarded \$25,000 to Comunidades, a new collaborative project founded by Latino activists to provide pathways and support for underserved Latino communities as well as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to overcome racial, social, and environmental injustices in the Columbia River Gorge. The grant will invest resources and education into Skamania County communities. Comunidades, formed in late 2018, includes Columbia Gorge-based educators, activists, parents, and students.

A priority of the organization is to create inclusive and bilingual opportunities for residents to engage and build community in local environmental movements that have historically been led by Anglo communities. “In the Columbia River Gorge and Skamania County, many Latinos and other Communities of Color want to protect clean water, clean air, and natural resources, but have not been invited to the table in significant ways or know how to engage in traditional environmental groups—Comunidades is changing that,” said Ubaldo Hernández, senior organizer with Columbia Riverkeeper.

Organizers and volunteers of Comunidades recognize a unique opportunity to expand support and empowerment to underrepresented communities given the current racial and social justice movements that are creating bridges for intersectional environmentalism, where social, racial, economic, and environmental justice are inextricably linked.

“I grew up in Hood River and have been helping Comunidades expand its communications efforts. It’s exciting to receive new investments that support BIPOC-led community engagement from foundations like CFSWW and Columbia Riverkeeper during a time where our energy and platforms are growing in the journey to dismantle systems of oppression and combat air and water pollution,” said Gabriela Garcia, Comunidades Volunteer and Columbia Riverkeeper Communications Assistant. “BIPOC communities are mobilizing in new ways to make our voices heard and to protect clean water and the long-term health of our families and communities.”

Comunidades will leverage funds from CFSWW to create a detailed work plan for the next year and specific goals over the next three years by recruiting and welcoming new members from Skamania County. Due to COVID-19, Comunidades has adjusted its programming and outreach to online strategies to respect physical distancing measures. For more information about Comunidades and to get involved, contact Ubaldo Hernández, ubaldo@columbiariverkeeper.org (541-490-7722) or visit their [Facebook Page](#).

About [Columbia Riverkeeper](#)

Columbia Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Columbia Riverkeeper works with people in dozens of communities—rural and urban—with the same goals: protecting the health of their families and the places they love. Columbia Riverkeeper enforces environmental laws to stop illegal pollution, protects salmon habitat, and challenges harmful fossil fuel terminals. Columbia Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest growing environmental movement, uniting more than 300 Waterkeeper organizations around the world.